

FMO Country Guide: Azerbaijan

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Formal name: Republic of Azerbaijan.

Capital: Baku.

Estimated population: 7,771,092 (2001 est.).

Map

<http://www.az/maps/azerb.html>

Summary

Post-Cold War ethnic conflict in Azerbaijan has been violent and has led to massive population displacement inside the country. Ethnic conflict has affected a specific region – the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region of Azerbaijan. Currently, this region is under dispute as both Azerbaijan and Armenia make historical claims to it. Azerbaijan became independent from the Soviet Union in 1991 but ethnic conflict

began in 1988 when the Armenian majority in the Nagorno-Karabakh region declared unification with Armenia. Ethnic violence followed between the Azerbaijani and Armenian communities in Nagorno-Karabakh. Between 1988 and 1991 members of both ethnic groups were forced to flee as ethnic tensions worsened forcing Azerbaijanis to leave for Azerbaijan while Armenians fled in the opposite direction to Armenia. After the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991, this conflict escalated into full war, it has cost the lives of thousands of people, and hundred of thousands became refugees or internally displaced. Although this conflict took place within the national territory of Azerbaijan, it also has an international dimension, as Armenia supports ethnic Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh.

In the early 1990s nearly one million people were displaced into other parts of Azerbaijan or into Iran when Karabakh and Armenian forces made significant military advances in areas outside Nagorno-Karabakh. The territorial gains by Karabakh and Armenian forces have resulted in Azerbaijan losing about 20 per cent of its own territory outside the Nagorno-Karabakh region. In May 1994 a ceasefire was agreed between both sides and has generally been observed. Today Azerbaijan host almost 600,000 displaced persons and more than 200,000 refugees. The Minsk Group of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) is mediating peace negotiations, but it has so far made no significant breakthrough, particularly regarding the status of the Nagorno-Karabakh region.

Websites:

CIA World Factbook 2002

<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/aj.html>

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1. Overview

1.1 Historical background

The territory of modern Azerbaijan has a history of migrations, invasions, and different political and cultural influences. Azerbaijan history was much influenced by the Persian Empire before and after the Christian era. Between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries the Turks introduced the Turkish language and culture to the country. In the fifteenth century most of modern Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan became part of the Ottoman Empire. And in the eighteenth century, as the Persian Empire weakened, the Russia Empire began a 200-year domination of the country. In territorial terms and under Russian influence, two important treaties were made in the nineteenth century; in 1813 the Treaty of Gulistan officially divided Azerbaijan into Russian (northern) and Persian (southern) territories, and in 1829 the Treaty of Turkmanchay awarded the region of Nakhichevan to Russia.

At the beginning of the twentieth century the Russian Empire began to crumble. In Azerbaijan radical political organizations started to emerge, and in 1917 Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan formed the independent Transcaucasian Federation. The same year Tsar Nicholas II abdicated the Russian throne and the Bolsheviks took power in Russia. In 1918 the independent states of Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia emerged following the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in World War I. The

independent state of Azerbaijan was short-lived (likewise those of Armenia and Georgia), and in 1922 the Red Army invaded the country. Between 1922 and 1936 Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia became a single republic within the Soviet Union: the Transcaucasian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic. In 1936 the three countries became separate republics within the Soviet Union, and the purges against intellectuals, political opponents, and others in the region were at their peak until 1937. From 1922 to 1991 Azerbaijan, like Georgia and Armenia, underwent a process of Sovietization that included intensive industrialization, collectivization of agriculture, and shifting large parts of the rural workforce to industrial centres. During this period there was extensive development of the education, health, and social welfare systems. Azerbaijan declared its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. Like the other newly formed independent states in the Caucasus, during the early years of independence Azerbaijan experienced political, social, and economic problems. But ethnic conflict in the Nagorno-Karabakh region and international disputes, most notably with Armenia over the same region, has dominated the post-independent period. To some extent, the Nagorno-Karabakh issue has affected the process of political reforms and economic advancement.

1.1.1 The Nagorno-Karabakh issue

The roots of the present conflict can be traced to the early twentieth century. After the Russian revolution, Armenia and Azerbaijan fought over Nagorno-Karabakh – a region that both countries have claimed for centuries. In 1919 the Paris Peace Conference granted territorial rights over the region to Azerbaijan. The Soviet Union maintained the Paris Peace agreement regarding Nagorno-Karabakh. In 1924 the Soviet Union created the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic in the area between Armenia and Iran. This republic was separated from the rest of Azerbaijan, as the district that connected it to Azerbaijan (Zangezur) was awarded to Armenia. The same year the Soviet Union also created the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region within Azerbaijan, an enclave whose population was overwhelmingly ethnic Armenian (about 94 per cent at the time, later decreasing to 75 per cent in the late 1980s). These changes meant that Armenians and Azerbaijani communities became separated from their respective ethnic groups and republics.

During the last years of the Soviet Union and extending into the 1990s the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region became an issue of nationalistic self-expression for Armenia and Azerbaijan. While Armenia insisted on self-determination for its fellow-Armenians, Azerbaijan argued historical acceptance of its sovereignty over Nagorno-Karabakh, regardless of the region's ethnic composition. In 1988 anti-Azerbaijani demonstrations broke out in Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh, and the Supreme Soviet in Nagorno-Karabakh voted to secede from Soviet Azerbaijan. In November 1989 the Nagorno-Karabakh National Council declared its unification with Soviet Armenia. In 1990 violence between Azerbaijani and Armenian communities broke out in Nagorno-Karabakh, Baku, and Sumgait. Moscow sent troops to Azerbaijan and declared a state of emergency in Nagorno-Karabakh. The Russian army remained in Azerbaijan after 1991, but the collapse of the Soviet Union led Russia to declare it would no longer support Azerbaijani military action in Nagorno-Karabakh. On their part, Armenian forces used this opportunity to increase military action, while Azerbaijan continued to impose a blockade against Armenia.

The fighting that took place from 1992 to 1994 between Armenian and Karabakhi forces and Azerbaijanis cost the lives of thousands of people. By the end of 1993 the Armenian and Karabakhi forces had occupied most of Nagorno-Karabakh, Lachin, and large areas in southwestern Azerbaijan. This led to hundreds of thousands of Azerbaijanis fleeing the advancing forces to other parts of Azerbaijan. That same year the UN Security Council called for the cessation of hostilities, access for international relief efforts, the eventual deployment of a peacekeeping force in the region, and the immediate withdrawal of ethnic Armenian forces from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. The fighting continued, however, until May 1994, when Russia negotiated a ceasefire. Peace negotiations to resolve the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh started in 1992 under the guardianship of the Minsk Group of the Conference on Security and C-operation in Europe, now Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Since 1994 no large-scale military conflict has taken place, but there have been sporadic violations of the ceasefire. Efforts continue to resolve the conflict.

Since 1992 the UN and most international humanitarian organizations have had no access to the Nagorno-Karabakh region and surrounding territories. As a result, there has been no assessment of the nature and extent of humanitarian and reconstruction needs in those areas. One of the few international humanitarian organizations working inside Nagorno-Karabakh is the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

Websites:

Library of Congress Country Studies

[http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?fdr/cstdy:@field\(DOCID\)+az0007](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?fdr/cstdy:@field(DOCID)+az0007)

Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)

http://www.osce.org/publications/survey/survey_22.htm

UN Security Council Resolutions

<http://www.state.gov/p/rls/or/13508.htm>

Bibliography:

Greene, T. *The Forsaken People. Internal Displacement in the North Caucasus, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia*. Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institutions, 1996.

1.2 Politics

The political situation in Azerbaijan following its independence on 30 August 1991 was extremely volatile. There was growing discontent with the government of Albufaz Elchibey (elected in June 1992) due to its inability to manage the economy or deal with the Nagorno-Karabakh issue. In June 1993 an army insurrection took place against Elchibey's government, and he was formally deposed by a national referendum in August 1993. In October Geidar Aliyev was elected to a five-year term as president. Between 1969 and 1981 Aliyev had been the First Secretary of the Azerbaijan Communist Party and he was later a member of the USSR Politburo (until 1987). In 1998 Aliyev was re-elected for a further five years, but the elections were flawed with serious irregularities.

The government of Azerbaijan consists of three branches: the executive branch made up of the president, his apparatus, a prime minister, and the Cabinet of Ministers. The legislative branch consists of the 125-member parliament. Members are elected from territorial districts, and 25 are elected from party lists every five years. The judiciary is headed by a constitutional court that is nominally independent.

The Constitution of Azerbaijan approved in 1995 provides the baseline for transforming political life from a one-party state to a multi-party system. The process of democratizing society is manifest, for instance, in the existence of opposition parties and the development of civil society. Improvements, however, have been overshadowed by serious irregularities, such as that which took place during the re-election of Aliyev in 1998. Furthermore, parliamentary elections in 2000 did not meet international standards as free and fair elections.

Websites:

CIA World Factbook 2002

<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/aj.html>

OSCE 2001

http://www.osce.org/odihr/election/az/az_ehr.html

US Department of State. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour

<http://www.state.gov/g/dri/rls/hrrpt/2001/eur/8225.htm>

1.3 Culture

Ethnically, Azerbaijan is primarily composed of Azerbaijanis (90 per cent), and culturally and linguistically these are a Turkish people. Other ethnic groups include Dagestani (3.2 per cent), Russian (2.5 per cent), Armenian (2 per cent), and others (2.3 per cent). Azerbaijan has a rich cultural heritage that has been influenced by long periods of Persian and Russian domination as well as by its ethnic make-up.

1.4 Ethnic minorities

(¹1988 estimates)

Russian (474,000, but decreasing)

Armenian (200,000, now only in the Nagorno-Karabakh region)

Lezgin (170,000, northeast, near Dagestan)

Talysh (130,000, southeast, Lenkoran region)

Meskhetian Turks (60,000)

Avar (45,000, Zaqatala and Belokany regions)

Tatar (30,000)

Tat (22,000, northeast, near Quba and Baku)

Tsakhur (15,000, north, near Kas)

Georgian (14,000)

Kurd (13,000)

¹ The figures quoted rely on statistical data from the 1989 census and/or estimates. The Azerbaijani government conducted another census in 1999 and more current figures can be obtained from the State Statistical Committee of the Azerbaijan Republic.

In the final years of the Soviet Union, the outbreak of hostilities and anti-Armenian riots led to the expulsion of many Armenians and the departure of others. An estimated 10,000 to 20,000 Armenians still live in Azerbaijan, mostly in mixed Azerbaijani–Armenian families. Some have changed their nationalities to become Azerbaijani. Armenians have complained of employment discrimination, and harassment in schools and workplaces, as well as the refusal of local government authorities to grant them passports or to pay pensions. Armenian widows have had their permits to live in Baku revoked. Ethnic Russians, Meskhetian Turks displaced from Central Asia, as well as Kurdish displaced persons from the Lachin region have all complained of discrimination.

The government officially recognizes freedom of emigration. Jewish emigration to Israel is unrestricted. Regarding Armenians, the official policy is that ethnic Armenians are free to travel. However, low-level officials seeking bribes have been known to harass Azerbaijani citizens of Armenian origin wishing to emigrate or obtain passports

The most important feature of the ethnic composition of Azerbaijan has been the emigration of a large number of minorities. Around 400,000 Christians (Armenians, Russians, etc.) and Jews have left Azerbaijan since 1988. About 40,000 Jews have left Azerbaijan for Israel. Another trend has been immigration, with the influx of 233,682 refugees. Since 1988, when the conflict over Nagorno Karabakh worsened, 616,546 people have been geographically displaced. It is unlikely that this conflict will generate more of an increase in immigration. What it is more likely to happen is that the emigration of Russians, Jews, Azerbaijanis of Armenian origin, members of other minority groups, and Azerbaijanis in search of work (mostly to Russia) will continue.

There are no restrictions on the participation of minorities in politics as individuals. However, explicitly ethnically or religiously based parties were prohibited from participating in past elections. Members of ethnic minorities such as the Talysh, Lezgus, and Kurds occupy senior government positions.

Websites:

A to Z to Azerbaijan
<http://www.azerb.com>

CIA World Factbook 2002
<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/aj.html>

US Department of State. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor
http://www.state.gov/www/global/human_rights/1999_hrp_report/azerbaj.html

State Statistical Committee of Azerbaijan Republic
<http://www.azeri.com/goscomstat/>

Bibliography:

The World Directory of Minorities, London: Minority Rights Group International, 1977.

1.5 Religions

(1995 estimates)

- Muslim 93.4 per cent – the majority of Azerbaijanis are Shia Muslims. Following independence there have been both a Muslim revival and a rise in nationalism
- Russian Orthodox 2.5 per cent
- Armenian Orthodox 2.3 per cent

The Constitution allows people of all faiths to practise their religion without restriction, and the government respects this provision with regard to Shia and Sunni Muslims, Russian Orthodox Christians, and Jews. However, a law regarding foreigners and stateless persons contains language that prohibits religious ‘propaganda’ by foreigners. This provision was reinforced by presidential decree in 1997. There is no state religion. The law on religion subordinates all Islamic religious organizations to the Azerbaijan-based Spiritual Directorate of the Caucasus Muslims. The Ministry of Justice requires that religious congregations be registered. In 1999 it continued to deny registration to a foreign Christian group (Jehovah’s Witnesses), but it did allow it to function during that year.

Non-Orthodox Christian groups have complained credibly of official harassment. Because of anti-Armenian sentiment and the forced departure of most of the Armenian population, Armenian churches remain closed. There is some evidence of strong prejudice against ethnic Azerbaijanis who have converted to Christianity. The Jewish community has freedom to worship and conduct educational activities.

The present Constitution of Azerbaijan, adopted on 12 November 1995, adheres to the protection of human rights and the equality of all its peoples. The 47 articles of the third section of the Constitution provide for the protection and development of ethnic minorities’ cultures and languages. There are three other relevant legal acts: the Law on Religious Freedom, the Law on Citizenship, and the Law on Mass Media.

Websites:

A to Z to Azerbaijan

<http://www.azerb.com>

CIA World Factbook 2002

<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/aj.html>

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The World Directory of Minorities, London: Minority Rights Group International, 1977.

1.6 Geography, society, and economy

Azerbaijan is located in South Caucasus, bordered by Russia to the north, the Caspian Sea to the east, Iran to the south, and Georgia and Armenia to the west. It covers an area of 13,000 square miles, including the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic and

Nagorno-Karabakh region. Its terrain is made up of the Great Caucasus Mountains in the north, the Karabakh Upland in the west, and the Abseron Peninsula in the east. Azerbaijan has a dry, subtropical climate with hot summers and mild winters. The country has two main natural hazards: droughts and the threat of flooding by the Caspian Sea in some lowland areas.

Azerbaijan has an economy in transition in which the state continues to play a dominant role. It has considerably energy resources (important oil and natural gas reserves) and significant agronomic potential based on a wide variety of climatic zones. Its third most important product is cotton. At present it has a GDP of US\$23.5 billion (2000 estimate). Azerbaijan's economic stabilization programme has brought inflation down from 1,800 per cent in 1994 to 1.8 per cent in 2000. GDP has been increasing for the last five years. The programme to privatize agricultural land and small and medium enterprises is almost complete. Sixty per cent (2000 estimate) of the population still lives below the poverty line, and the unemployment rate is 20 per cent (1999 estimate).

Azerbaijan is considered one of the most important areas in the world for oil exploration and development. There are substantial oil reserves in the Caspian Basin, which Azerbaijan shares with Russia, Kazakstan, and Turkmenistan, but exploration is still in the early stages. The continuing conflict with Armenia over the Nagorno-Karabakh region remains an obstacle to economic progress, as foreign investment is unlikely to increase in the present insecure climate.

The most pressing environmental issues facing Azerbaijan are water and air pollution problems created by the Caspian petroleum and petrochemicals industries; and soil contamination by DDT and toxic defoliants used in cotton production during the Soviet era. Environmental agencies do exist in Azerbaijan, but clean-up and prevention programmes have been hampered by lack of funds. Over-fishing of the Caspian sturgeon stocks is also a serious issue. The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) has listed all sturgeon species as threatened.

Excessive application of pesticides and chemical fertilizers has caused extensive groundwater pollution, and Azerbaijani scientists have linked this to birth defects and illnesses. Azerbaijanis face difficulties with access to safe water, lack of sanitation, and access to health care facilities. There is little research and development regarding social medicine, and drugs and equipment are in short supply.

The infant mortality rate stands at 83.08 per 1,000 live births (2001 estimate). The average number of children born per woman is 2.24 (2001 estimate). Average life expectancy in 2001 was 62.96 years (58.65 for men and 67.49 for women). Around 28.95 per cent of the population is under 15 years of age.

Azerbaijan has had obligatory eight-year education since 1957. According to Soviet data, 100 percent of males and females (ages nine to forty-nine) were literate in 1970. After independence from the Soviet Union an educational reform programme was introduced to modify the existing system. This included an increase in the use of the Azerbaijani language in schools and religious instruction.

Websites:

CIA World Factbook

<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/aj.html>

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Open Society News: Will Oil Funds Benefit the Masses (Or Just the Ruling Classes)

http://www.eurasianet.org/osn/Will_Oil_Benefit_the_Masses.html

US Department of State

http://www.state.gov/www/global/human_rights/1999_hrp_report/azerbaij.html**2. Causes and consequences****2.1 Conflict-induced displacement**

Internal displacement in Azerbaijan has been the direct result of the conflict over the Nagorno-Karabakh region. This post-Soviet conflict is the result of nationalistic aspirations which in 1988 culminated in ethnic tension and violence when ethnic Azerbaijanis in Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia became the targets of violent attacks, as did ethnic Armenians living in Azerbaijan. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Armenia and Azerbaijan became independent states. On 6 January 1992 the ethnic Armenian leadership of Nagorno-Karabakh proclaimed the 'Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh'. However, neither Azerbaijan nor the international community recognizes this claim. The Karabakh Armenian cause is supported, both economically and militarily, by Armenia and the Armenian diaspora.

There is widespread recognition of the international component of this conflict, and it is explicitly referred to at international levels. UN Security Council Resolutions numbers 822 (1993) of 30 April 1993, 853 (1993) of 29 July 1993, 874 (1993) of 14 October 1993, and 884 (1993) of 12 November 1993 refer explicitly to the deterioration of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and the tensions between them, and urge the government of Armenia 'to continue to exert its influence' over the Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians, and 'States to refrain from the supply of any weapons and munitions which may lead to an intensification of the conflict or the continued occupation of the territory'. The UN Security Council has also explicitly referred to the economic blockade imposed by Azerbaijan against Armenia. On 29 January 1993 the president of the UN Security Council made a statement (S/25199) expressing 'deep concern at the devastating effect of interruptions in the supply of goods and materials, in particular energy supplies' to Armenia and to the Nakhichevan region of Azerbaijan, and called to governments in the region 'to allow humanitarian supplies to flow freely, in particular fuel'.

Azerbaijani forces have been recapturing some of the areas gained prior to 1994 by the Karabakh and Armenian forces. The government of Azerbaijan has started a rehabilitation and reconstruction programme in the war-devastated areas, which has the support and financial backing of the international community. Since 1994 displaced persons have been returning to their original regions, but the overwhelming majority of people displaced by this conflict continues to live in camps and settlements throughout Azerbaijan.

Websites:

Library of Congress Country Studies

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?fdr/cstdy:@field>

UN Security Council Resolutions

<http://www.state.gov/p/rls/or/13508.htm>

2.2 Refugees and internally displaced persons

In early 2002 the total number of internally displaced people (IDPs) in Azerbaijan stood at 572,000. The Azerbaijanis constitute the largest group of displaced people in the Caucasus. The entire Azerbaijani population of Nagorno-Karabakh (around 42,000 people) was displaced by the conflict. The overwhelming majority of the displaced in Azerbaijan (526,000 people), however, comes from the western regions of the country, which since 1993 have been under Armenian occupation. Most of the displaced used to live in regions and districts bordering Nagorno-Karabakh such as Fizuli, Agdam, Lachin, Kelbajar, Jabrayil, Gubadli, Zangilan, Terter, and Ajabedi.

Most of the displaced population (over 99 per cent) are ethnic Azerbaijanis. The remainder are around 4,000 Kurds from the Lachin and Kelbajar districts and several hundred persons of various ethnic groups, mostly Russian

The gender and age composition of the displaced population indicates that 70 per cent are children and women. According to figures produced by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, around 53 per cent of the displaced population is either under-age or elderly. The displaced population is comprised of a broad range of professionals, farmers, and workers. Most of are Shia Muslim, but the Kurds from the Lachin and Kelbajar districts are Sunni Muslim (Greene 1998: 254).

According to UNHCR (1999), 54.04 per cent of IDPs are located in urban areas, and 45.96 per cent in rural areas. The former live mostly in Baku, but also in Sumgait and to a lesser number in Ganja and Mingeshvir (UNDP 2000). The displaced population living in rural areas has congregated in areas close to their regions of origin, forming what has come to be called the 'IDP belt'.

More than half of the displaced population continues to live in types of temporary shelter such as public buildings, hostels, schools, day care centres, railway cars, unfinished buildings, sanatoriums, camp settlements, and makeshift roadside settlements. For example, around 700 public buildings house the nearly 115,000 IDPs in districts such as Xatai and Binagady in the capital city, Baku and in Sumgait (USAID). Of the remaining IDP population, a minority can afford to rent private

accommodation; others live on farms, in houses built by humanitarian agencies, and in houses provided by the State Committee for Refugees, and some have resorted to illegal occupation. Twenty-six per cent of IDPs live with relatives and friends, and less than 3 per cent of displaced people have been able to buy their own homes.

Reports comparing the urban and rural resettlement of the displaced population tend to indicate that in some ways the experiences of those displaced in urban areas is less favourable, despite there being more access to humanitarian aid. A United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) development report (2000) found that urban IDPs often live in shelter inadequate for human habitation, without employment opportunities, and that many experience severe psychological stress. The material living conditions of the displaced population in rural settlements are not much better – most continue to live in tents or mud-brick houses. The main factor that seems to mitigate these conditions is that they are able to follow their former livelihood and continue living in a similar environment. Community networks often prove resilient despite displacement, and some community structures have recreated themselves in IDP camps. This phenomenon of recreating community structures after forced migration is particularly evident among internally displaced Kurds.

Websites:

Global IDP Database

<http://www.db.idproject.org/Sites/idpSurveys.nsf/Countries/Azerbaijan>

The UN Human Rights System 1999. Thematic Reports

<http://www.hri.ca/fortherecord1999/>

UNHCR 1999

<http://www.unhcr.ch/world/euro/azerbaij.htm>

UNHCR 2001 Population Statistics (provisional)

<http://www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/taxis/vtx/home/opendoc.pdf?tbl=STATISTIC&id=3d0df33d4&page=statistics>

US Committee for Refugees (USCR)

<http://www.refugees.org/world/countryrpt/europe/azerbaijan.htm>

US Department of State

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USAID

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UNDP, *Azerbaijan Human Development Report*, UNDP, Baku 2000.

2.3 Legal and institutional framework

The following national institutions deal with the internally displaced in Azerbaijan:

The State Committee for Refugees and Displaced Person: This body has direct responsibility for the IDP population and, together with the regional Executive Committees, provides direct assistance to IDPs. The Ministries of Health, Education, Labour, and Social Affairs, and parliamentary commissions for social policy and for human rights are all included within this institutional framework.

The Department of Repatriation: This body was created in 1999 within the structure of the state committee (above) to coordinate repatriation of the displaced in the event of peace. So far, this department has been involved in directing the repatriation of IDPs to the liberated villages of Agdam and Fizuli.

The Department for Refugees and Forced Migrants: This department monitors the implementation of legislation relating to IDPs. Its staff conducts on-site visits, and the department has representatives in IDP camps and shelters. The district authorities of those areas from where IDPs originate have representation within this department.

The Republican Commission on International Humanitarian Assistance: This body was created in 1995, and its task is to coordinate the receipt and distribution of international humanitarian assistance. Representatives of this commission have two main tasks: liaising with international organizations and NGOs, and coordinating programmes in specific areas of Azerbaijan.

The State Commission for Reconstruction and Rehabilitation: Established in 1996, the commission is in charge of coordinating all national and international input towards reconstruction.

The Republican Commission on International and Technical Assistance: This commission, via its Working Group, is responsible for coordinating all programmes (e.g., income-generation projects among IDPs) in designated provinces of Azerbaijan. Recently, it has been dealing with the problems of families displaced by the rising levels of the Caspian Sea (Greene 1998).

The institutional framework outlined above, in particular, the Republican Commission on International Humanitarian Assistance, has helped to improve cooperation between the government and donors and humanitarian aid organizations. However, the UN Human Rights Report 1999, points out that there is recognition among government officials that there is a need for greater coordination within government, and between national and local authorities. The same report points out the lack of coordinating mechanisms to ensure cohesiveness and unity in the collective response of these various entities. The government is attempting to establish a State Commission for Development of the Unified Migration Management Programme to cover the five separate but interrelated areas of refugees and internally displaced persons; labour migration; labour policy; labour management; and migration information systems (UN Human Rights Report on Azerbaijan 1999).

In relation to the asylum and citizenship laws, UNHCR and the Council of Europe assisted Azerbaijan in refining a new Citizenship Law. The new law makes those who fled Armenia between 1988 and 1992 eligible for Azerbaijani citizenship. It was adopted by parliament on 30 September 1998.

UNHCR has helped Azerbaijan in the development of effective asylum systems. It has drafted and amended the asylum law in conformity with international standards, and has advised the government on its implementation (UNHCR).

Websites:

Mercy Corps International

<http://www.mercycorps.az/cgi-bin/publications.cgl/>

UN Commission on Human Rights 1999

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2.4 Peace process

Since 1992 the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), has been engaged in sponsoring peace talks. The Minsk Group is currently jointly shared by Russia, France, and the USA. In the early years, peace efforts met with little success and several ceasefires broke down. The conflict also threatened to expand into the foreign territories of Iran and Turkey. During the offensives of late 1993 Armenians occupied large sections of southwestern Azerbaijan, near the Iranian border. In 1993 Turkey reinforced its forces along the Armenian borders and warned Armenia to withdraw its forces from Azerbaijan, while Iran conducted military exercises near the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic which were widely seen as a warning to Armenia. Iran proposed the creation of a 20-kilometre security zone along its border with Azerbaijan, where Azerbaijanis would be protected by Iranian firepower. In 1994 Armenian forces held around 20 per cent of Azerbaijan territory outside Nagorno-Karabakh, including 160 kilometres along the Iranian border. In late 1994 the OSCE Budapest Summit agreed on the eventual deployment of a peacekeeping force – the first of its kind for the organization. This proposal, however, has not yet been put into effect.

By early 1998 the peace effort had delivered little in terms of any certainty as to when and how the conflict would be resolved. While both parties were committed to conflict negotiations within the framework of the Minsk Group, there are still significant differences between them regarding the conflict settlement process. Azerbaijan's main concerns are two-fold. First is the question of securing its territorial integrity, while agreeing to grant substantial autonomy to Nagorno-Karabakh. Second is securing the return of the displaced Azerbaijani population to Nagorno-Karabakh and to the surrounding territories currently occupied by Armenian forces.

In 2000 the Minsk Group drafted four peace plans, but none has been fully accepted by the conflicting parties. For example, Armenia favours the so-called 'common state' model, proposed in 1998, which suggests horizontal relations between Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh. Azerbaijan, in contrast, favours the vertical model, and is prepared to grant the dispute region only 'the highest degree of autonomy' within the country. The OSCE has indicated that they it will not put forward another draft peace proposal, but will support any settlement agreed between Azerbaijan and Armenia.

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has impacted negatively on the economic development of Azerbaijan and Armenia. The OSCE Minsk Group has promised significant economic assistance to both countries once a final peace agreement is found. Currently, however, the conflict in Azerbaijan continues unresolved, and sporadic fighting stills takes place along the border. Within this context, any large-scale return of the displaced population remains uncertain.

Websites:

Global IDP Database 2002

<http://www.db.idproject.org/Sites/idpSurveys.nsf/Countries/Azerbaijan>

Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

<http://www.osce.org/complete>

OSCE 2001

http://www.osce.org/publications/survey/survey_22.htm

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL)

<http://www.reliefweb.int/w/rwb.nsf/6686f45896f15dcb852567ae00530132/cd1bed21b48e5c15c12569b600514b91?OpenDocument>

<http://www.reliefweb.int/w/rwb.nsf/6686f45896f15dbc852567ae00530132/d4572f4f10707158c1256b890062017fOpenDocument>

2.5 Disaster-induced displacement

Recently Azerbaijan has suffered natural disasters such as earthquakes and floods caused by the rising levels of the Caspian Sea. Natural disasters have already displaced many people and are likely to cause further population displacement.

Azerbaijan suffers from serious earthquakes (8 to 9 on the 12-magnitude scale). The most dangerous places are considered to be on the slopes of the Greater Caucasus Mountains. Two earthquakes have occurred recently: one in June 1999 in the Agdash district and another in November 2000. The latter measured 10 on the Mercalli Scale, was felt in Baku, Sumgait, and thirteen other regions, and caused widespread damage to homes and public buildings. Six hundred people were injured and there were many casualties. The earthquake in Agdash resulted in the evacuation of more than 2,500 people from their damaged homes, while in Baku several IDP centres and many buildings housing IDPs were found to be unsafe. A total of 1,200 families were evacuated or forced to move from their dwellings

During the last few years the level of the Caspian Sea has risen significantly and this is having a devastating effect on the ecology and economy of coastal areas. Towns, settlements, and other facilities along the coast of Azerbaijan are in need of engineering protection or relocation from their current sites. In Lenkoran, south of Baku, for example, floods and the rising water levels have forced the displacement of around 2,000 families.

Websites:

A to Z to Azerbaijan
<http://www.azerb.com>

UNDP 1996

<http://www.undp.org/rbec.nhdr/1996/azerbaijan/contentsthtm>

See also Greene, Thomas 1998. *The Forsaken People. Internal Displacement in the North Caucasus, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia*. Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institutions

Bibliography:

Greene, T. *The Forsaken People. Internal Displacement in the North Caucasus, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia*. Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institutions, 1996.

2.6 Development-induced displacement

Development activities such as construction of dams and reservoirs for hydroelectric power, irrigation, and water supplies have the potential to provoke population displacement on a large scale.

Websites:

Global IDP Database 2002
<http://www.db.idproject.org/Sites/idpSurveys.nsf/Countries/Azerbaijan>

OFDA/CRED International Disaster Database

<http://www.cred.be/emdat/profiles/natural/azerbaijan.htm>

2.7 IDPs' needs and responses

The internally displaced in Azerbaijan have significant needs, which include the broad range of economic, social, civil, and political rights. Most IDPs continue to live

in camps and other temporary shelter, often at below subsistence levels, without adequate food, housing, education, sanitation, or medical care. There are limited economic opportunities, and high levels of food insecurity. According to the State Committee for Refugees and Internally Displaced People (SCRIDP), the internally displaced in Azerbaijan are worse off than the rest of the population in terms of health and nutritional status. Indicators reveal higher levels of malnutrition in IDP households, chronic malnutrition among IDP children of 6 to 59 months, and anaemia among IDP women. The finding of a World Food Programme (WFP) survey (2001) reported that only 19 per cent of IDPs were meeting basic food needs. At present the average monthly income for an IDP family is \$46. The income necessary to meet basic food requirements is estimated to be between \$60 and \$82.

Unemployment is high among IDPs: two-thirds of the over 300,000 in a position to work are unemployed. One of the proposed oil pipelines in Azerbaijan will run close to the conflict area of Nagorno-Karabakh and also closer to areas of high IDP settlement in Barda and Ajabedi. Pipeline construction may create a source of temporal employment for IDPs.

In terms of health, the most vulnerable IDPs are those living in tent camps. The Hygiene and Epidemic Centre of the Health Ministry reports that the death rate of newborn IDPs/refugees is six to eight times higher than normal. In Azerbaijan the average death rate is 25 deaths per 1,000 new born. Among IDPs/refugees the number is 150 to 200. The UN Human Rights Report on Azerbaijan (1999) acknowledges that the health of IDPs has deteriorated as a direct result of their displacement. Free health care is universally available in Azerbaijan but very limited, and the vast majority of displaced persons are too poor to afford private health care.

2.8 Government responses

International organizations estimate that about 70 per cent of IDPs are poor, with 35 per cent of these categorized as very poor (USAID 2001). The assessment conducted by the World Bank (1998) provides slightly higher figures, indicating that 79 per cent of IDP households live in poverty; 41 per cent of these are categorized as 'extremely poor'. Thus, the great majority of IDPs (86 per cent) continue to rely heavily on subsidies and pensions from the government, and food aid from international organizations. Their government subsidies include a bread subsidy, a children's subsidy, and, during the winter months, a kerosene subsidy. The government has also embarked on an agricultural programme to allocate land to displaced farmers for collective or individual farming. However, the WFP (2002), among others, has indicated that land allocated to IDPs tends to be in drought-stricken areas, and that, agricultural production has therefore been insignificant. Another initiative by the government has been to decree that the State Oil Company contribute to the budget of the State Committee for Refugees (SCR) in 2001 and 2002. The money contributed in 2001 was earmarked to provide food aid to 57,000 IDPs, as some international relief organizations had stopped giving food aid to some of the displaced population. The 2002 oil contributions were to go towards improving shelter and the socio-economic conditions of IDPs and towards providing food to 157,258 IDPs; some money has been specifically allotted to the SCR for the resettlement of 3,719 IDP families to Bilesuvar. In December 1999 the government approved the creation of the Social Fund for Development of IDPs, the main aim of which is to improve living

conditions. The board of the fund includes government representatives, the heads of three donor agencies (UNDP, USAID, and UNHCR), and representatives of NGOs and the private sector. The World Bank supports this strategy.

One important feature regarding the situation of IDPs in Azerbaijan is the sense of solidarity that exists between the government and the displaced population. This stems from the nature of the conflict that has caused the displacement: the external dimension as well as the ethnic kinship that exists between national authorities and the majority of the displaced. From the point of view of protection, this means that IDPs in Azerbaijan are unlikely to be attacked or harassed by the authorities. Nonetheless, IDPs do face discrimination when it comes to sharing resources and legal constraints. A report by the UN Economic and Social Commission on Human Rights (January 1999) recommended that the government of Azerbaijan improve the conditions of the displaced in several areas, including protecting their right to freedom of movement and choice of residence, and ensuring that they are not excluded from or negatively affected by the land privatization process.

2.9 Responses by international agencies

The international aid agencies operating in Azerbaijan are involved in the delivery of humanitarian and/or development assistance to IDPs and refugees. They provide education programmes, sanitation, health care, income generation programmes, community services, and shelter. Examples of their work include the feeding activities of the WFP, currently providing food to around 180,000 beneficiaries; and the emergency repairs of public buildings that house IDPs to improve standards of safety, health, and sanitation (e.g., UNHCR and USAID). In rural areas agencies provide mud-brick shelters, latrines, and potable water (e.g., USAID). Health clinics (mobile and stationary) provide basic primary health to around 400,000 people. Most of these services are delivered by private Azerbaijani doctors and nurses, contracted by international agencies, but recently this work has been shifting to government-run facilities and is being coordinated by UNICEF (USAID 2001).

One issue central to international aid agencies is to work towards the self-reliance of IDPs and refugees. Several international agencies are supporting the transition from humanitarian assistance to long-term development. UNHCR works in partnership with the government, the World Bank, UNDP, the UN Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), and others to promote self-reliance and local settlement among IDPs. The work of agencies includes activities such as training and capacity building to make improvements in social and economic services (e.g., primary health care, maternal and child care, reproductive health), setting up micro-credit programmes in urban areas, and establishing micro-projects at community level (USAID 2001). To some extent, however, progress towards durable solutions has been hampered by government emphasis on the return of IDPs to their original homes, the state of the economy, and the enormity of the scale of the basic humanitarian needs that remain unmet. The UN Human Rights report (January 1999) acknowledges this situation and points out that ‘A wholesale transition from relief to development is therefore premature. Under these circumstances, it is particularly worrying that funding constraints currently are forcing a withdrawal or considerable scaling-down of several programmes of international agencies and organisations addressing the basic humanitarian needs of the displaced.’

Websites:

Coordination Meeting Report. Monthly Inter-Agency Meeting
<http://www.azerweb.com/NGO and International Organizations Reports/>

UN Commission on Human Rights (CHR) 1999

[http://www.unhcr.ch/Huridocda.nsf/\(Symbol\)/E.CN.4.1999.79.Add.1.En?Opendocument](http://www.unhcr.ch/Huridocda.nsf/(Symbol)/E.CN.4.1999.79.Add.1.En?Opendocument)

UN Economic and Social Council Commission on Human Rights 1999

<http://srch1.un.org/plweb-cgi/fastweb?sorting=>

UNHCR 2001

<http://www.unhcr.ch/pubs/fdrs/ga2002/ga2002toc.htm>

USAID 2001

<http://www.usaid.org/ge/factsheets/fsS03laz.html>

World Bank

<http://poverty.worldbank.org/library/view/8614/>

World Food Programme (WFP)

http://www.wfp.org/country_brief/projects/101680.pdf

Bibliography

WFP, *Household Food Economy Survey Among the Internally Displaced Persons in Azerbaijan*. WFP, Baku (November 2001).

2.10 Refugees in Azerbaijan

The new Law on Citizenship makes those refugees who fled Armenia between 1988 and 1992 eligible for Azerbaijani citizenship. The law was drawn up with the assistance of UNHCR and the Council of Europe, and was adopted by parliament in 1998. According to the Azerbaijan National Committee of the Helsinki Citizens Assembly in 1988–91, more than 221,000 Azerbaijanis, 11,000 Muslim Kurds, and 3,500 Russians have left Armenia for Azerbaijan. In addition, 4,500 Azerbaijanis and people from other ethnic origins have entered Azerbaijan from Kazakhstan, and 60,000 Meskhetian Turks have fled from Uzbekistan to Azerbaijan after becoming victims of inter-ethnic pogroms. More recently arrived refugees include 1,000 Afghans who are registered as refugees with UNHCR, and around 8,000–10,000 Chechens who fled from Russia. The number of Chechens registered as refugees with UNHCR is 4,500. The human rights situation of Chechens in Azerbaijan is detrimental. The US Department of State report (2001) indicates that Chechens are not issued with residence permits, Chechen children are not allowed to attend state schools and Chechens have to pay for medical services. Chechens have complained of arbitrary arrest and police harassment.

Websites:

The Human Rights Center of Azerbaijan

<http://www.koan.de/~eldar/refugees>

UN Commission on Human Rights 1999. Information on measures in the field of human rights undertaken by the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan in the year of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights E/CN.4/1999/122.

UNHCR

[http://www.db.idpproject.org/Sites/idpSurvey.nsf/49034D0F07D0463DC1256B1400498AF6/\\$file/UNHCR+Mid+Year+Report+2001.pdf](http://www.db.idpproject.org/Sites/idpSurvey.nsf/49034D0F07D0463DC1256B1400498AF6/$file/UNHCR+Mid+Year+Report+2001.pdf)

US Department of State. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor
<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2001/eur/8225.htm>

2.11 Voluntary repatriation of IDPs and refugees

Surveys conducted by international agencies (e.g., UNDP 2000) have often found that the large majority of IDPs wish to return to their homeland. IDPs have begun to return to those areas that have been liberated by government forces. However, these are war-devastated areas where the infrastructure (homes, schools, and hospitals) has been damaged or destroyed. Moreover, landmines have been extensively used. According to UNMAS (UN Mine Action Service) an estimated 19,500 square kilometres of land in western areas of Azerbaijan are mine affected.

A Programme for the Resettlement and Reconstruction of the Liberated Areas, designed by the government and the international community, has been set up to support the return of more than 36,000 people to liberated and war-damaged areas. The Azerbaijani Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Agency (ARRA) implements the programme, under the leadership of the State Commission for Reconstruction and Rehabilitation. Returning IDPs and refugees have had their government benefits extended to three years as from the date of their return. The programme includes shelter reconstruction and rehabilitation, employment generation, and the rehabilitation of health care facilities, schools, power and water supplies, and communication links in the Fizuli, Agdam, and Terter districts. UNDP, UNHCR, the World Bank, WFP and the EU have jointly made financial commitments to support this resettlement programme.

The landmine issue is being address by UNDP and the government through a major mine humanitarian action programme that involves de-mining activities, assistance to victims, and mine awareness activities. In addition, the Azerbaijan National Agency for De-mining has been established, and the training of local personnel in mine clearance is currently taking place.

Websites:

Global IDP Database

<http://www.db.idpproject.org/Sites/idpSurvey.nsf/wCountries/Azerbaijan>

Landmine Monitor Core Group

<http://www.icbl.org/lm/2001/report/>

UNDP, Azerbaijan Human Development Report (UNDP, Baku) 2000
http://www.un-az.org/undp/HDR2000_en.pdf

UN Commission on Human Rights

[http://www.unhchr.ch/Huridocda.nsf/\(Symbol\)E.CN.4.1999.79.Add.I.En?Opendocument](http://www.unhchr.ch/Huridocda.nsf/(Symbol)E.CN.4.1999.79.Add.I.En?Opendocument)

UNMAS

<http://www.org/Depts/dpko/mine/overview.htm>

2.12 Women

The experience of forced migration, in particular the detrimental economic effect it has on displaced families, has led to changes in gender roles. Displaced men, heads of their households, are no longer able to fulfil the customary expectation to take care of the economic needs of their families. Reports suggest that men often leave their wives and children in IDP camps to go to Baku in search of work. Some even travel abroad, especially to Russia. These situations have left women with a double burden – the need to fulfil their domestic and childcare responsibilities in the household, as well as engaging in whatever economic activity they can find.

Women in Azerbaijan are faced with the problem of violence, including domestic violence. However, Azerbaijan has no government-supported or government-funded programmes to assist victims of domestic violence. There is a law against rape, which carries a fifteen-year prison sentence, but the general opinion is that the crime goes largely unreported. Rape is a taboo subject in Azerbaijani society. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, prostitution in Azerbaijan has become a serious problem, particularly in the capital Baku.

Azerbaijan is the source and transit point for human trafficking. Azerbaijani women are mostly sent to the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Iran, Turkey, or Western Europe. Once there, they end up working as prostitutes. Women of various nationalities (e.g., Iranian, Russian) are also transported through Azerbaijan to the UAE, Western European countries, and even the USA for prostitution. The trafficking syndicates are large and based abroad, and in countries such as Azerbaijan they work via middlemen, who may be nationals or foreigners, in charge of selecting and targeting women. Azerbaijan has no specific laws that prohibit human trafficking. However, articles that prohibit forced prostitution and labour can be used to prosecute traffickers. The government of Azerbaijan has no support services for women victims of trafficking, and there is no campaign to raise awareness of trafficking. Men and children may also be the victims of trafficking. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is involved in conducting awareness campaigns on this issue.

The independent sector is providing assistance to women on a number of issues including reproductive health and family planning, income generation activities for IDPs and vulnerable groups in urban and rural districts, peacemaking activities, AIDS education, and preventing domestic violence, as well as trafficking in women and prostitution. In 2001 the national NGO Institute for Peace and Democracy opened a

crisis centre for women in Baku. By 2001 there was a total of twenty-four registered NGOs addressing women's issues.

Websites:

Global IDP Database

<http://www.db.idproject.org/Sites/idpSurvey.nsf/wCountries/Azerbaijan>

ISAR (Initiative for Social Action and Renewal in Eurasia)

<http://www.isar.org>

UN Commission on Human Rights

[http://www.unhchr.ch/Huridocda.nsf/\(Symbol\)E.CN.4.1999.79.Add.I.En?Opendocument](http://www.unhchr.ch/Huridocda.nsf/(Symbol)E.CN.4.1999.79.Add.I.En?Opendocument)

US Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor

<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2001/eur/8225htm>

2.13 Civil society

The development of the third/independent sector in Azerbaijan has been slower than in other post-Soviet independent countries in the region (e.g., Georgia). International agency initiatives and support have significantly contributed towards developing the independent sector in Azerbaijan. According to the NGO ISAR (Initiative for Social Action and Renewal in Eurasia), by 1999 there were an estimated 125 to 200 national NGOs working in Azerbaijan. Most, however, are still in the preliminary stage of development and work with very limited resources. ISAR conducted a survey to assess the needs of national NGOs. Its findings revealed that more than 60 per cent of the groups interviewed had no paid staff, 45 per cent had no office space, and 52 per cent had no computer (ISAR 1999). They also faced the additional problem of acceptance from local state authorities, and few NGOs have had access to basic training on organizational skills or professional performance. The majority of national NGOs are located in the capital, Baku, and concentrate on the fields of environmental issues, human rights, civil society building, and social and educational issues.

Reports indicate that women have growing influence in decision making in southern IDP camps. They are actively involved in identifying and solving problems associated with camp life, and have elected a women's committee to deal with issues such as access to safe drinking water and nurseries for children (IFRC 2000).

The development of the environmental NGO movement in the Caspian region has been slow but steady. NGOs that pay particular attention to the Caspian Sea (lake) situation include ISAR, which has an information centre on environmental and human health issues related to the Caspian Sea; CAUCASUS, which concentrates on increasing pollution levels; ECORES, which collects, analyses, and distributes information about condition of Caspian Sea resources; and the Ruzgar Environmental Society, whose work includes monitoring and raising public awareness on environmental issues. ISAR is also implementing a three-year environmental programme funded by USAID and UNDP, which is aimed at bringing together environmental activists from around the region to discuss, share information, and

work together on regional and environmental problems (information obtained from ISAR website).

Websites:

Global IDP Database

<http://www.db.idproject.org/Sites/idpSurvey.nsf/wCountries/Azerbaijan>

IFRC 2000

<http://www.reliefweb.int/w/rwb.nsf/f303799b16d2074285256830007fb33f/5a37ceb53ace3f9c112568ea004f9461?OpenDocument>

ISAR

<http://www.isar.org/isar/caspian>

<http://www.isar.org/azerineeds.html>

USAID

http://www.usaid.gov/regional/europe_eurasia/countries/az/

2.14 International organizations

The main international agencies involved in Azerbaijan include: the United Nations Human Rights Committee, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank, the US Agency for International Development (USAID), Caritas (Denmark), the International Society of the Red Cross (ISRC), the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC), UNICEF, the World Food Programme (WFP), the World Health Organization (WHO), and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA).

Other agencies include the Mercy Corps International (MCI), the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), the International Rescue Committee (IRC), Save the Children, and the Community Housing Foundation (CHF). Shore Bank Ltd and the Foundation for International Community Assistance (FINCA) provide small- and medium-scale loans to IDP, refugee, and war-affected populations to increase their economic viability. All these organizations are funded by USAID.

Major international donors who have funded humanitarian relief/development programmes include The Netherlands, Germany, Britain, Turkey, Norway, Sweden, the European Community Humanitarian Organization (ECHO), the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and a number of UN agencies. These donors have channelled their aid through bilateral arrangements directly to NGOs and to UN agencies such as WFP, UNHCR, and UNICEF. Some assistance is channelled through government agencies. ECHO has been a significant donor to Azerbaijan relief efforts, but recently announced its intention gradually to phase out future support.

2.15 Other sources of potential conflict

A possible source of a new conflict is the Caspian Sea. As yet, Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Russia, and Turkmenistan have not clearly determined a way of sharing the Caspian Sea, and no unifying criteria on this issue exist. Until recently, there were

two different international law perspectives on the Caspian Sea. Russian and Iran viewed it as a lake with common resources, while Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan considered it a sea with national sectors.

Russia no longer insists on the inviolability of the sea's former status. This was based on 1921 and 1940 Soviet–Iranian agreements, which stated the indivisibility of the sea, including its seabed, and the impossibility of foreign firms acting without the consent of all countries in the region. Iran, on the other hand, in a meeting of deputy foreign ministers of the Caspian states in February 2001, stated that the 1921 and 1940 treaties should be the basis for adopting a new legal regime. At present, Kazakhstan and Russia are in favour of dividing the Caspian seabed only, leaving the seawaters in common use. Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan are in favour of dividing both the sea's bed and its waters. Iran advocates the joint use of the seabed and the water. At the same time, Iran supports full (equal) division of the Caspian if the other countries agree to take this step. In the ongoing debate over the Caspian Sea region what is at stake is the oil and natural gas fields, transport routes, and fishing rights. Concern about the environmental risks of oil and gas development in the Caspian Sea is shared by all the countries involved. For instance, Russia and Iran are opposed to the laying of trans-Caspian pipelines until a legal framework is in place to oversee environmental and biological issues, and to determine legal responsibility for use of the Caspian Sea.

The Caspian problem has already caused several incidents, mostly involving, on one side, the Iranian navy and air force and, on the other, ships carrying out marine surveys or other vessels linked to oil and gas exploitation.

In Azerbaijan ethnic tensions and disputes are acknowledged but are not considered serious, and tend to be limited to particular areas (USAID 2001). It is worth noting the ethnic tensions in Dagestan (Russia) between the Avars and the Laks, however. Azerbaijan has an Avar enclave along its Russian and Georgian borders.

Websites:

A to Z to Azerbaijan

<http://www.azerb.com>

EIA (Energy Information Administration)

<http://www.eia.doe.gov/cabs/casplaw.html>

ISAR

<http://www.isar.org/isar/caspian>

USAID

http://www.usaid.gov/regional/europe_eurasia/countries/az/

3. Other resources

3.1 Azerbaijani newspapers

Adabiyat (in Azerbaijani)

Azadliq (in Azerbaijani and Russian)

Azerbaijan (in Russian)
Hayat (in Azerbaijani)

3.2 Other electronic resources

Azertag News Agency
<http://www.azertag.com>

Council of Europe
<http://www.coe.int>
 Eurasia Foundation South Caucasus Cooperation Programme
<http://www.efscpc.org>

International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights
<http://www.ihf-hr.or>

International Organization for Migration
<http://www.iom.int>

Mercy Corps International
<http://www.mercycorps.az>

UNICEF
<http://unicef.org/programme/highlights/cee/azerbaijan>

US Committee for Refugees
<http://www.refugees.org>

World Food Programme
<http://www.wfp.org>

3.3 Non-electronic resources and bibliography

Hayden, W., 'Azerbaijan'. In Jane Hampton (ed.), *Internally Displaced People: A Global Survey*. Global IDP Survey of the Norwegian Refugee Council, 1998. London, Earthscan Publications.

The Europa World Yearbook 2000, London, Europa Publications (2000).

Thompson, J., 'Rehabilitating the War-damaged Regions of Azerbaijan', *Contact*, vol. 1, no. 4, 2000.